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ABSTRACT

This report on a seminar on adult literacy and public policy aims to make available for discussion current significant issues in the relationship between literacy and the economy, including matters that extend well beyond the institutional boundaries of the economy. This document summarizes a presentation by Jarl Bengtsson, Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Next are summaries of presentations regarding policy and programming arrangements in Sweden, by Kjell Rubenson and Kenneth Abrahamson; in Germany, by Hans Schutze; and in Massachusetts, by Gerald D'Amico. Issues discussed in the seminar included the following: education as a priority; a new techno-economic paradigm; the labor force, education and training, and labor market management; the undereducated and marginalized; three arguments on the marginalized, education, and economic participation; articulating education to new economic demands; the public schools; making the case for adult literacy in Canada; innovative literacy programming strategies; education for the new economy--policy, funding, and equity; and research for adult literacy. Eleven references, a list of participants, and three data tables conclude the document. (KC)

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ADULT LITERACY AND PUBLIC POLICY:

REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

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ADULT LITERACY AND PUBLIC POLICY:

REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Organized by

Centre for Policy Studies in Education
University of British Columbia

and

Canadian Association for Adult Education

RICHARD DARVILLE

CPSE CENTRE FOR POLICY STUDIES IN EDUCATION CPSE

ADULT LITERACY AND PUBLIC POLICY:

REPORT OF AN INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR

Organized by

Centre for Policy Studies in Education
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Canadian Association for Adult Education

This document is a report on a Seminar on Adult Literacy and Public Policy, held in Toronto, Canada, in February 1988. The report aims to make available for discussion certain current significant issues in the relationship between literacy and the economy, including matters that extend well beyond the institutional boundaries of the economy.

The Seminar was organized as part of a research project undertaken by the Centre for Policy Studies in Education at the University of British Columbia and the Canadian Association for Adult Education. The goal of this project is a review and a re-framing of existing knowledge about the role of literacy in society. The review includes a critique of existing definitions and measurements of literacy and illiteracy, in media accounts and policy documents as well as in academic work. The re-framing will develop a conception of literacy as means of entering into social relations, and will develop accounts of the ways in which various literacies-in-use let people enter into various kinds of social relations — in workplaces and in community and political life. This re-framing will let us understand the current demand for literacy as a part of the transformation of social relations in workplaces and in public life in contemporary society, and allow us to raise questions about the relations between literacy programming and those larger transformations.

Public policy discussions about the emerging economy, and discussions about adult literacy, are more and more overlapping. How economic interests appear from the point of view of literacy work, and how literacy work appears from the point of view of economic interests, are now key practical and analytical questions.

From the economic point of view of employers and labour market authorities, literacy appears as an interest in workers' capacity to read necessary manuals or write necessary reports, and generally to communicate effectively with co-workers or supervisors. Some take a relatively static view of the relations between literacy and the economy, arguing, for example, the costs of workplace accidents or errors attributable to the limited education of workers. Others, including participants in this seminar, take a more dynamic view, arguing that the literacy needs of the labour force should be thought through in the same terms in which we think through overall

changes in the economy; and that literacy needs to be thought about in relation to other current education and training issues.

Some literacy educators object to such an economic view of literacy. They view reading and writing straightforwardly as basic rights, or see literacy as the means and practice of full participation in society. Getting and holding jobs is a part of full participation, and so is one element of the point of view of literacy work. However, some argue that equity goals of education may be lost in the inequalities of economics. Some argue that education should preserve literacy and intelligence in general from the narrowness of training for economic functions. Some argue that talk of the "costs of illiteracy" blames people who don't read and write well, and who have little power, for failures of our society.

In any event, we think it is is important for people on all sides of this discussion to have a clear understanding of the questions at stake. It is in that spirit that we have prepared this report. The report aims not only to sum up people's remarks at the seminar, but also to clarify various lines of argument and their relations. To make the report, we have taken a free-wheeling and open-ended conversation, and laid it out as a more or less continuous argument under various headings. Thus we offer not a formal academic presentation, but a means of listening in on a discussion among informed people (participants are listed in Appendix 1). We hope that it seems a clarification to participants. And we hope that it will be useful to literacy researchers, policy makers, and literacy practitioners and activists who are interested in policy issues.

The seminar began with a presentation by Jarl Bengtsson, Head of the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation of the Paris-based Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). This presentation largely structured the discussion that followed. There were also presentations regarding policy and programming arrangements in Sweden, by Kjell Rubenson and Kenneth Abrahamson; in Germany, by Hans Schutze; and in Massachusetts in the United States, by Gerald D'Amico. These presentations also figured prominently in the discussion and are reflected in the report.

Our report of the Seminar begins with an edited transcript of the first part of Jarl Bengtsson's presentation, set out here in typescript to distinguish it from the remainder of the report.

Education as a Priority

Education is again as a top priority among OECD governments. Three indicators show this clearly.

- A declaration from the 1987 meeting of OECD Ministers of Finance for the first time identified education and training as a very important issue in coping with structural changes in the economy.

• In the OECD's medium-term program of work, education figures among the four top priorities for the organization. This has never happened before.

• Countries are expanding their budgets for education again. In this month's U.S. budget, there is an increase in spending on education. This contrasts strongly with what Reagan said in 1980 when he went in. In the current French Presidential campaign, both sides are taking up education as a top priority, and in a number of OECD countries, the political controversy around increasing attention and resources to education is less sharp that it used to be.

Why has education come back as a top priority on the political agenda over the last two or three years? Broadly speaking, I think that there are three principal reasons. The first is the concern for educational standards and quality. The second is the new actors that are moving into the educational arena. The third is the emerging new economy. I'm going to say a little bit about each of them, with particular focus on the third, the new economy.

Educational standards and education quality has become a very important issue politically in the nearly all of the OECD countries. It started perhaps with a 1983 U.S. publication about the nation at risk,and spread very quickly to Europe. 1 There is no doubt that there is an issue about standards and quality. At the OECD, we are working hard to develop educational indicators which hopefully will provide a better understanding of whether standards are falling, and if so what kind of standards are falling.

The whole issue of education standards and quality is very difficult. The basic question is, if there is a fall in standards, to what extent is it due to factors internal to the education system, like teachers' salaries, and to what extent is it related to external social factors? Within the Secretariat we are leaning more towards the explanation that external factors lie behind those cases where there is a fall in standards. We are in particular working on this notion of "social capital" – meaning the parent communities' interest in the kids' schooling. If you look at family composition today in most OECD member countries – for example the number of single parent families – you see that the situation has dramatically changed from what it was only ten years ago.

Another fundamental problem is that in some countries the concern for standards and quality is associated with a "back to the basics" movement. We think that's a very short-sighted perspective.

It's interesting what's happening in educational policy debate in Japan, whose education system is considered by many to be excellent. It takes a large number of kids up to eighteen, with high standards. Many delegations from the West visit the Japanese system. But within Japanese society there is a very intense debate about the shortcomings of the present system. It is a complicated debate, but it involves an analysis that Japanese education is not producing the creativity that the Japanese economy will need in

the future, and should bring in concern for entrepreneurship, creativity and initiative. This concern for standards and quality will be with us for years to come and it explains partly the new interest in education.

New actors are also moving into the educational arena. Due to high levels of unemployment in most OECD countries, nearly every ministry of labour or employment has moved into the education and training field. In the UK today, for example, of the sixteen and seventeen years olds, one out of two is getting education or training from the Manpower Services Commission, in the Department of Employment. The entry of the Department of Employment is to a large extent setting the scene for educational debate. Another new actor is, of course, the private sector, which increasingly raises its voice about education, in nearly all of the OECD countries. The private sector wants to be involved in this debate. So in the years to come, the educational policy debate is not going to be a concern only for traditional ministers of education. New actors have moved into the scene, and they're going to stay there, and they're going to speak very loudly.

A New Techno-economic Paradigm

The third factor behind this new interest is changes in the economies of the OECD. There is something of a paradox in the OECD economy today. We have over the last five years had the longest economic upswing since the Second World War. There has been steady although slow economic growth – about 2.5 percent of GNP. But, at the same time, we have had a continuously increasing number of unemployed people. Our analysis shows that there are a little over thirty-one million people unemployed today within the OECD.2 This is the paradox: steady economic growth over a long period and a steadily increasing rate of unemployment.

The debate among economists about this paradox has been intense. In a simplified way, you can say there have been two schools of thought. One school has said that we are moving into the jobless growth society – economic growth, but never again full employment as we defined it in the 1960s. What is happening now with manufacturing and will happen soon with the service sector is exactly what happened earlier to agriculture – increasing productivity but decreasing manpower needs.

The other view has been that this is just a temporary problem. The reason we have such high levels of unemployment is because the market, and in particular the labour market, is not free and flexible enough. If we could get greater flexibility and do away with rigidities in the labour market, unemployment would go down. Most governments have embraced this interpretation.

Today, however, there is new consensus gradually emerging about how to explain this paradox. This view says that we are moving very quickly into a new techno-economic paradigm. The basic feature of this paradigm is that major clusters of new technology have an enormous productivity potential, and these new technologies will dramatically change the way that our economies operate. The fact is that the new technology so far hasn't resulted in a productivity increase, but this is because we

haven't been able to match the new technology with the necessary innovation at the workplace and investment in human resources. This interpretation of the paradox is that the basic problem isn't with new technology per se. The basic problem has to do with the capacity to innovate in what the Japanese call "organizationware" and "humanware." Economists who are working hard on this third way of interpreting the paradox say that if and only if innovation can take place in organizationware and humanware will we be able to profit from the new technology in terms of employment.

At the OECD, we're working to analyze differences in economic performance between the leading OECD countries, in terms of capacity to innovate in organizationware and humanware. An interesting case in point is the Japanese economy and what has happened to it since the Plaza Agreement in 1985, after which the U.S. dollar went down and the yen went up. The Japanese are still extremely competitive, and this can't be explained by traditional monetarist theory. There is something very important in their capacity to deal with organizationware and humanware.

There are, of course, changes in how things are being produced in this new economy. First of all, due to increased international competition, there is an ever-increasing stress on producing high quality products. Secondly, the life-cycles of products and services are becoming shorter and shorter, and this increases the pressures for continuous adjustment in production.

Because of the shorter life-cycles of products and services, there is also an increased degree of displacement in the labour market and increasing pressure on the flexibility of the labour market. There are also clear indications that we're moving towards post-Tayloristic modes of work organization, more flexible and less hierarchical – and more responsive to these changes in the market. The kind of work organization that seems to be taking the upper-edge is onion-shaped, not the traditional pyramid. That is related to a general upskilling trend in relation to new technology. Routine, low-skilled jobs are melting away like snow in the sun because of new technology. This is creating an enormous challenge, not least for management, and not least in Anglo-Saxon countries.

It is interesting to compare skill-level differences in the manufacturing sector and the service sector. There seems a clear tendency to a contraction of skill-level differences in the manufacturing sector which used to have the greatest, while in the service sector, skill-level differences are increasing. There is also a greater range of wages in the service sector. That, to some extent, can explain externalization from the manufacturing sector into the service sector. From the higher echelons in manufacturing, people go out into the service sector, to get more money. People at the lower level of manufacturing are pushed out there, because they are too expensive in the manufacturing sector. We are looking hard to see if this hypothesis holds.

In manufacturing, multiskilling is becoming a must. And in enterprises that have gone whole-heartedly for multiskilling, it makes an enormous difference, in comparison not least to the traditional Anglo-Saxon craft-union based compartmentalized division of labour. We did a rather big study a couple of years

> ago on this problem of work organization and skills.3 We focused on the automobile industry in five countries: the U.S., Japan, Germany, France and Sweden. In Japan we looked particularly at Toyota and in the U.S. at Ford. We looked at different plants, including the press shops, where the technology is more or less exactly the same in Japan as it is in Detroit. To change the dies in those press shops, which must be done more and more quickly now because of short production cycles, in Toyota took five minutes and forty-one seconds. At Detroit they were a little bit over four hours The difference can only be explained by the way these workers are skilled, and the way the whole work organization functions. There's no other way of explaining it.

Other participants also commented on work organization and worker skill levels as key factors in economic functioning and competitiveness. Hans Schutze argued that a basis of generic skills and general knowledge is the foundation for any job-specific knowledge, and is crucial for flexibility, for people to move from one workplace to another, either within the same firm or across firms. Basic skills are important for functioning in the workplace, in an innovative way. It is crucial that people no longer, as under "scientific management," check their brains at the cloakroom. Heads of education and training in Toyota, Ford, Volkswagen, Volvo and Renault, all say that it is not sufficient that people have specific training, geared to working with a particular machine. Rather broader skills are required — social, teamwork and communicative skills, with literacy and numeracy as a foundation.

There were similar reports from Sweden and Germany regarding new technology's posing demands for skills, including literacy skills. Kenneth Abrahamsson reported that in one Swedish factory shifting to process production, there was a puzzling increase in illnesses among workers. Investigators suspected that many people lacked basic skills — and that this surfaced as psychosomatic illness. Two union members were employed to interview employees around the workplace and find people who identified themselves as having educational needs — about ten percent seemed to need adult basic education. In many situations in Germany it has become apparent that some people's skills don't let them use efficiently some sophisticated gear reaching the shop floor. When new equipment comes to a firm and work organization is changed, people suddenly have to look into a manual or some system description. Some workers then say they're getting sick, or don't like the job anymore, so they drop out.

Some participants reiterated that new work organization may be a source of productivity increases, and added that it may even become necessary for worker recruitment. One participant reported that in the US recently, GM closed down a plant although it had new technology, while a Japanese automaker ran a plant with lower technology but new work organization, where productivity has skyrocketed. This experience suggests that with flatter work organization, autonomous work units, and higher educational backgrounds, industries can become competitive even without capital-intensive changes.

Several participants also warned against a myth that service sector jobs are necessarily low skilled. There does seem to be a greater spread in skill levels in the service sector than in manufacturing, and many new jobs are projected to be in

services. But there is increasing pressure on "customer-oriented skills," with a move of people from back offices into front offices. One participant reported that entertainment park cleaners now sometimes get extensive job-training, because cleaners have the most contact with park visitors. One participant reported that even fast-food outlets are increasing their search for social skills and communication skills. Another participant emphasized that janitors increasingly work with chemicals that can cause serious damage if they are not properly used.

In further discussion on demand for labour, two optimistic points about the employment consequences of new technology were offered. Kjell Rubenson noted that some pessimistic predictions of recent years have not been borne out. There were many predictions, in the late 1970s and early 1980s, about unemployment that would result from new technology,but there is very little evidence for this in the OECD literature, although enormous displacement is taking place. [4] In the short term at least many new jobs have been created due to technological shifts — and there might have been increased employment had there also been new developments of organizationware and humanware. Jarl Bengtsson argued from historical precedent that the new techno-economic paradigm and its productivity potential implies the possibility of creating more employment. Historical work on the role of technology shows that major breakthroughs in technology have always led to increases in demand for labour — and we are experiencing a whole cluster of new technologies.

The Labour Force, Education and Training, and Labour Market Management

Jarl Bengtsson identified a number of policy issues regarding the articulation of education and training policies, and labour market management policies, to new economic demands.

> How is this development of the new economy reflected in the educational policy agenda today? Let me very briefly mention six policy issues in the education-economy area that are bound to figure during the years to come. They will all be discussed at a major OECD intergovernmental conference in the spring of 1988, called Education and the Economy.
>
> The first issue is that there is no doubt a need to strike a new balance between youth and adult education during the years ahead. Adult education and training will need to be given greater priority. This is not only related to the demographic situation but to the simple fact that it is adults in the workforce who are first hit by changes in the economy, and it's with those workers, not with kids in schools, that economies and nations are supposed to be competitive. In relation to this new balance between policy priorities for adult and youth education, there are bound to be some quite difficult issues in terms of the extent to which institutions of youth education can be increasingly used for adult education. Analysts in some countries are saying for instance that the secondary level is going to be a new melting pot of adult and youth education.
>
> The second policy issue is that new partnerships have to be developed between education and the new actors that are entering

the arena – that is to say between public and private sectors, between unions and employers and educational authorities. In some countries, it's quite a tricky policy issue. There is vast work to be done in forging new partnerships. There should, for example, be possibilities for public sector adult education to buy education and training at the enterprise, the argument being that the actual concept is much better and up to date there, than in a public institution. That's one form of collaboration between the public and the private sector. You already see a lot of people from enterprise going to teach in the public sector.

The third issue relates to the need for a greater flexibility between initial education and continuing education – including relationships between the credential system of initial education and whatever credential system might be developed for education and training at the enterprise or in the private educational market.

A fourth issue relates to the need for new means of financing adult education. We thought we had a beautiful idea of transferring money from the financial sector to the real economy. What happened October 19th last year on Wall Street made it a little difficult to continue. But I think the analysis is still solid – that it's a very dangerous thing when the financial sector gets too separated from the real economy, particularly when the real economy has to move into more knowledge-intensive activity and is short of money to invest in education and training. Thus there is a rationale for transferring money from the financial sector for specific educational purposes in the real economy. The Swedes have experimented with transferring private sector profits over a certain level into education funds. There's great interest in that, although it was an *ad hoc* scheme, partly introduced in order to keep wages down, but it's interesting in terms of looking for new ways of financing adult education and training.

The fifth issue is the very thorny question of educational content. There seems to be a growing consensus that initial education should focus on providing generic skills, and leave the more vocationally oriented skills, whether specific or general, to the enterprises or to adult education. That's an issue there's going to be a lot of debate on.

The sixth and final issue concerns higher education. In nearly all the OECD countries, we see new links between industry and higher education, particularly faculties of natural sciences. There is also an increasing concern to form links between social science and humanities faculties and industry. Although many people in those faculties don't want to get their hands dirty with industry, there is certainly a mission for them. In a more and more international market where cultural factors are important, those faculties are sitting on a lot of competence.

Here is an interesting if slightly exaggerated comparison of how higher education in the United States, Japan and Europe relate to the economy. The US produces too many lawyers. European higher education is pouring out highly educated civil servants whose interest is to keep the public sector strong, thereby creating all

the rigidities in Europe. Japanese higher education is pouring out engineers who are very useful these days.

The Undereducated and Marginalized

In the context of his portrayal of broad economic and educational trends, and in relation to a dangerous tendency to economic polarization in many countries, Jarl Bengtsson opened up the question of illiteracy and literacy programming.

> There is another and perhaps even more fundamental policy issue which has to be addressed urgently in most OECD countries. That is the risk that we are moving into a polarized society, divided into people who are capable of functioning in a more knowledge-oriented economy and those left outside and gradually marginalized. Two existing indicators of this polarized society are long-term unemployment and adult illiteracy.
>
> Long-term unemployment has increased in all OECD countries. The most recent OECD *Employment Outlook*, published annually, gives figures for 1986 on long-term unemployment – defined rather strictly as being unemployed for more than twelve months. (See Appendix 2, Table 1). In the UK, they now have an 11.8 percent unemployment rate. Within that, 41.1 percent is long-term unemployment. In France it's even worse, 47 percent. Belgium is 68 percent. The Netherlands, 56 percent. Not so badly off are the North American countries and the Scandinavian countries. Canada in 1986 had 9.6 percent unemployment, of which 10.9 percent was long-term. Over the period 1979-1984 in Canada, unemployment steadily increased from 7.4 percent to 11.3 percent. Long-term unemployment as a percentage of total unemployment also increased, from 3.5 percent to 10.1 percent. Recently, despite the fact that the unemployment rate has gone down, from 11.3 percent in 1984 to 9.6 percent in 1986, long-term unemployment has gone up, from 10.1 percent to 10.9 percent.5
>
> It is very clear that the key parameter defining a person likely to be long-term unemployed is education and training. Labour market authorities in nearly all OECD countries are now struggling very hard with this issue. In labour market policy in general, there is a clear tendency to move from what we call passive measures to active measures. Passive measures are just handing out unemployment benefits. Active measures include employment services, labour market training, special youth programs, job creation and special measures for the disabled. These can be calculated as percentages of GDP. Canada is interesting: 2.43 percent of total GDP is devoted to labour market measures, but 1.84 percent, goes into passive measures, a fairly high share.
>
> It is a short distance from the problem of long-term unemployment to the issue of adult illiteracy. And adult illiteracy is today getting increased attention within the OECD governments. It used to be seen as an enormous problem for the developing world. It's a very difficult problem to define, of course. The latest UNESCO estimate is that around the year 2000 there will be nearly 850 million adult illiterates. Reliable figures from OECD are very difficult to get. There are however, some estimates, that

somewhere between two and eight per cent are functionally illiterate, defined as being incapable of responding to a vacancy note and such basic things. Figures from the US show that something like twenty-three percent of the active labour force is functionally illiterate. Figures from the UK show between three and seven million people functionally illiterate. In France there are some very good figures based on the French system of compulsory military service. Every year about 420,000 young males are drafted; last year there were 30,000 completely illiterate, about eight percent. Of the 420,000 about 210,000 finally got into the army. There were still 10,000 illiterate among them, which has forced the French army to launch major literacy campaigns.

So far very few strategies at the government level have been identified or tried. After decades of big educational investments, saying that illiteracy is going up is a little bit tough to take politically. So some governmental embarrassment and reluctance are understandable. But irrespective of that, governments will be forced to deal with it.

In the medium-term there will be pressure on governments to raise retention rates in initial education. For the actual labour force in OECD countries today, seven percent has not completed primary education. Over twenty percent of the labour force in OECD countries has no secondary education whatsoever. In terms of retention rates in full-time and part-time education for nineteen year olds in OECD countries, Canada is not that high – around the level of Spain. (See Appendix 2, Table 2).

In the short term, there are bound to be governments that opt for a passive instruments such as a kind of minimum salary. But another strategy will have to be more education and training. There is no ready-made strategy for this education and training. We know that going back to school is not going to work. There are encouraging experiments using computer-assisted instruction with adult illiteracy. There are encouraging results from things like Scandinavian study circles, that seem to eliminate some psychological barriers against going into education. But there is a desperate need for innovation in strategies here.

It's important for government to raise public awareness about these issues – awareness that what is at stake is important not only in social and human terms, but that adult illiteracy has to be seen as a very important economic issue. All the OECD countries will be facing labour shortages towards the end of this century, as is shown in labour force projections up to 1995 and even 2015 – combining the demographic situation with changes in demand for labour. (Cf. Appendix 2, Table 3). Increasing numbers of women are going into the labour market, but nevertheless, the trends are moving towards a shrinking labour force.

It will be extremely difficult for any country to face labour shortages with a polarized society, with large groups incapable of participating in a knowledge-intensive economy. The myth that economic efficiency and equity concerns are opposed has to be dismantled. In this new knowledge-intensive economy, and facing labour shortages, efficiency and equity have to work hand in hand.

> Otherwise, you're going to not be able to face up to the competition in the new economy. That is my final point.

Three arguments on the marginalized, education and economic participation

Many participants, especially the European and Massachusetts presenters, argued a case for literacy and basic skills education that asserted their identity with economic need. Participants made three kinds of arguments for increasing equity in education, workforce participation, and general quality of life.

The first is the long standing argument that economic growth is not an end in itself, but should be for the common good. (Thinking among economists about economics and ethics, although not very popular over the last ten years, is increasing).

A second argument (dominant in the Scandinavian countries) claims there is no opposition between equity and efficiency because having a large part of society marginalized, undereducated and underemployed inherently costs society. They don't pay taxes that support public services (indeed they will likely require some services). They don't build up a market that can consume the goods produced in the new economy. So full employment is a goal from an economic efficiency point of view. Although there is no conclusive analytical work on this issue, there was general sympathy in the seminar to the argument.

The third argument asserts that we are moving into a situation of increasing demand for skilled labour, and even labour shortages, as new technology creates more employment potential. In this situation, an economy can't afford large marginalized groups. This dynamic economic argument for a policy of increasing equity in education and in labour force participation doesn't stop us from using the first and second arguments, but it is the one that we can expect to be with us through the 1990s.

So in this view the economy needs an increasing labour force, and an increasingly highly skilled labour force. That means that participation rates need to increase, and that the level of workforce skills needs to increase. In European countries, where this view has taken hold and is reflected in government policies, there is an alignment of views among business, labour and government. Management sees that the efficient use of new technology requires education. Unions see that education is necessary to preserve the employability of workers. And government increasingly sees education as beneficial to both management and workers.

In Germany, Hans Schutze reported, projections are that the number of jobs requiring low skills will diminish. Twenty-eight percent of the jobs in Germany now require no formal qualifications. This will diminish over the next five years to less than twenty percent, and by the end of the century this will amount to ten to twenty percent. Already research shows that of long-term unemployed people, two-thirds are functionally illiterate. Pressure for education comes from both employers and unions. The employers see that they can afford the most sophisticated recent equipment, but they know that people cannot work with it unless they get additional training. The unions realize more and more that basic skills are the precondition for employability.

So one social partner pulls and the other pushes — both in the same direction — more basic skills for the workforce.

There is also rising awareness and a rising concern in government, not in education ministries alone, but also in economic ministries. The National Board of Labour in Germany spends about two billion Canadian dollars a year for labour market training, for two categories of people: those who are already unemployed, and those who are threatened by unemployment, due to technological displacement. This training includes courses outside the enterprise. In Germany much literacy work happens in a network of adult education institutions called *folkshochschule* (popular academy). Until as recently as two or three years ago, skill training was provided for under legislation. In the last years, collective bargaining has taken the lead, with provisions for a much larger share of people to be sent to training.

Kjell Rubenson described the recent Swedish history of adult education and literacy policies, beginning with the 1970s, which could be called an age of industrial democracy and social equity. In Sweden, over ninety percent of blue collar workers and over seventy percent of white collar workers are unionized. Labour and employers in Sweden have about equal strength, and so both have to take responsibility in certain ways. Adult education became the primary focus of attention in the 1970s, and the starting point was the struggle for industrial democracy within the labour movement. Adult education was seen as important because there was strong new legislation on workers' co-determination and work security. Workers were going to get more say, both for political reasons and for productivity reasons. The argument was made that just as one should be educated to vote, one now needs to be educated to take part in co-determination at the workplace, to be able to sit on boards, to have a say against the employer. There was an environment where education was seen as useful, and some interesting studies show that people's relationships to adult education and to knowledge are very much linked to their seeing that they have a say in the work organization. 6

During this time there was a focus on disadvantaged groups, such as immigrants, women, people in heavy industrial jobs, and people who work night shifts. Although the literacy level certainly was low within these groups, literacy at such was not defined as the focus. A general drive for everybody to get nine years of education came when equality was defined as quality of life. The focus was on the extent to which people have command over their life situations, and command was thought about in terms of political, social and economic and cultural resources. Literacy is, to a great extent, related to these resource variables. For example, studies have shown that even short courses have an impact on people's political resources.

Since about 1978, the Swedish economy has undergone a radical change, from heavy manufacturing to high or medium high technologies and service sector enterprises. The ship building industry, for example, was very significant in the economy, but there is hardly any ship building industry anymore. The Swedes adopted clear policy strategies to remain economically competitive in the face of this change. These policy strategies have included Research and Development policies at the scientific frontier (over 3.2 percent of the gross national product). But strategies to

protect human capital at the lower levels of the labour force have also been very important.

One innovative mechanism for funding adult education was the "renewal funds." In the early 1980s, with a high per capita deficit and a history of unions' negotiating capital investment as a trade-off to wage increases, renewal funds were developed on a one-time trial basis. Ten percent of "excess profits" were put into funds that could only be used for research and development, or adult education or education and training. The renewal funds had two real goals. One was to keep the inflation rate down, by stopping both higher wages and stockholders taking more money. The other goal was to assure continuous human resource development.

The Swedish government has to a certain extent moved away from the equity-driven policies of the 1970s and now relies more on the market. But the market has to some extent carried similar policies further. The rationale for this is the underlying notion of flexibility.

Looking at the Swedish strategies in retrospect, the key point is that equity and efficiency have gone gone hand-in-hand. Work towards industrial democracy has been very important in allowing the efficient use of technology. Sweden has more robots than any other country in the world, and there is an accompanying emphasis on flat work organization. The Swedish experience clearly indicates the importance of having management and labour with equal strength, and the state serving as a referee. It shows the need for a tripartite arrangement.

Articulating Education to New Economic Demands

The argument that "educated skill" is central to emerging forms of technology and workplace organization of course implies demands for new education and training. This in turn raises the question of how these demands will worked out in policy and programs — whether in specific school settings, at workplaces, in new private training arrangements, or in community settings.

Seminar participants generally assumed that the formal education system would be supplemented or supplanted by other forms of organization of education and training. Jarl Bengtsson reported an increasingly common argument that we are seeing the dismantling of a monopolistic institution of education, set up in a fairly static society to provide human capital, but inefficient in an economy which is more knowledge-intensive and where human capital becomes scarce. In many countries, ministers of education and even employment lag behind the real problems that unions and management people feel because they are close to a market situation and have to react. Some ministries of education jump on the bandwagon of a new interest in education, only to push traditional interests, and this is a dangerous thing, because of the backlash that might come from it. A response seems to be emerging in new "education and training markets." One can speculate that if education and training markets provide education for new technology, then what remains of the monopolistic system would be left to deal with socially corrective measures.

The Public Schools

Public schooling was not a major focus of attention at the Seminar, but it is central to the relations between literacy and the economy. The recognition of illiteracy is, as one participant put it, absolutely astonishing to a lot of people. We now see that there has long been what is now called an educational underclass, and that it may be growing. One very troublesome process internal to schooling may be that the emphasis on "standards" and "basics" in many countries diverts educational analysis and policy debates away from the issue of the educational underclass.

There is concern in many countries to identify strategies through which schools could enable all students to acquire basic skills. Some participants used a medical metaphor for this, speaking of the "prevention" of illiteracy in children. One approach likely to be taken is to ensure that students stay at school longer. But retention by itself is too simple. One participant put it ironically, saying there's a general myth that that the schools don't teach any skills and therefore we've got to keep kids in school longer, intervene at age three and keep them in until they're eighteen! Other approaches internal to the schools will be to improve teacher training, to recruit and train special teachers for people who have problems learning, and to monitor full attendance. There will also be proposals for measures external to the schools — "equalizers" to overcome the poverty barriers and the lack of social supports for young people that make it difficult for them to attend school or do homework.

Some participants expressed a skepticism about whether the system of initial schooling *could* be the total solution to current education and training problems. One European minister of education was quoted as saying that he had given up all dreams about compulsory education in his country, and had only one real objective — that when kids leave school at sixteen that they have as much self-confidence as when they entered the system.

It was taken for granted at the seminar that traditional schooling by itself is not an adequate response to adult literacy issues. It seems all too likely that people will continue to come out of school illiterate. Furthermore, as one participant put it, if you stop with the improvement of schooling, then you leave a generation which has no hope of getting rid of the stigma and handicap of illiteracy.

Making the Case for Adult Literacy in Canada

The voluntary sector in Canada has played a key role in pushing the adult literacy issue onto the political agenda. People working in the voluntary sector in provincial and national literacy organizations now see some real signs of success, although there is uncertainty about how long the current enthusiasm will last, and programming levels are still limited in most parts of the country.

Literacy proponents and literacy workers have long argued their case as an educational matter, or a matter of "the right to read." It is clear that these arguments have had effect. But it is also clear that another set of questions about the importance of literacy, and another set of arguments for it, is being pushed very hard. These

arguments appear to hold out the possibility of substantial increases in levels of public support for literacy work. They may also alter the shape of literacy work.

In many European countries, there is an acceptance of the view that we are working within a new economic paradigm, that we need to deal seriously with adult illiteracy, or more generally with disparities in educational achievement, and that this will require significant expenditures on literacy and adult education programming. The argument that there is a new techno-economic paradigm with important implications for education and training policy, is now appearing in Canada and the United States. A widely circulating analysis of the United States situation, *WORKFORCE 2000*, asserts that there must be increased emphasis on disadvantaged groups in the U.S. economy, because they will be needed to perform in it. 7 This is similar to the pure economic argument that OECD is pushing. In Canada there are similar discussions beginning, in the Economic Council of Canada,and in the Prime Minister's advisory board on scientific research. 8 This view will circulate from research reports to government planning documents over the next two or three years, and it will become more commonplace that the majority of new jobs created will require higher basic skills and higher literacy levels, that the number of jobs that require only very basic skills is decreasing, and that labour shortages are a danger.

Although the argument is beginning to appear, it hasn't taken hold here to the same extent that it has in Europe. Two interpretations of this are possible. One is simply that it's a matter of time until people become aware of the real economic processes under way. Another is that there are underlying differences in societies on opposite sides of the Atlantic — differences in the relations between management, labour and government. Thus Canadians often sense that the "equity-efficiency" argument doesn't resonate in our political climate, that the slogan expresses an unfamiliar optimism about collaboration between management and labour.

It was a common theme at the seminar that the involvement of management and labour is key to expanded public investment in literacy and basic education. One participant quoted a literacy worker in a community-based literacy program who said, speaking to a group of businessmen, "Nothing's going to happen until it starts to hurt you guys in the blue suits." Another participant even spoke of "the way the market place is paying attention, and consequently the way those who are elected pay attention." Much discussion centred on the relations between management, labour and government, as participants worked to understand how all three have responded to literacy problems, and how they might be led to respond more seriously. What is involved is not just a question of the view of management, or of unions, or of politicians — but of the differences among their views, or the development of a common view among them.

Management and Unions

There is seldom a common perception of the issue between management and labour, and there is some reluctance from both camps to take up the literacy issue as such. The "double push and pull" that Hans Schutze spoke of is not strong in Canada. One participant asked incredulously why the business sector, assuming that self-interest

guides it, hasn't come to grips with this problem which has been building over the last few years. It can't be, he said, just a question of lack of awareness. Several other participants described substantial management resistance to investment in education as an active labour market strategy. Conservative business leaders say that the public schools should already have accomplished education. And they take the topic as an opportunity to tackle the equity measures that already exist, arguing that expenditures on social and unemployment benefits are already too great, and that these should be cut to create a greater "pull" into the economy.

On the other side of the fence, labour was described as resisting examination of workplace literacy demands, and worker literacy levels — because they might threaten job security. People who have been hiding limited literacy feel that if they were out in the open, they would be exposed to dangers of demotion or dismissal. For unions, it was said, the transition from one economic paradigm to another involves crucial questions of what supports and protections are available to workers who have to make major adjustments.

One participant — experienced in dealing with managements and unions regarding training issues — observed that although the workplace is experiencing very important changes, people there don't know some things; and sometimes people there refuse to admit things that they do know, because they don't want to act on them. When problems arise with worker literacy or skill, it takes a long time to change awareness, but changes are happening. Private sector people who five years ago thought basic education was things like macramé are now coming to realize that initial education is not enough, that they will have to retrain people. The practical question is what sort of partnership relations between management and labour can change people's awareness and their readiness to act. One solution is to have them sit together at a human resource planning table.

Government

Beyond getting management and labour involved, there is often trouble with governments who don't see these new things, and politicians who worry that they are throwing their money away.

Most government resources to deal with adult literacy are in the provinces. There is of course no entity called "the provinces" — there are twelve individual provincial and territorial governments. All provincial governments now sponsor some activity in literacy work, and the Council of Ministers of Education is taking the issue seriously in its discussions. 9 But across the provinces there is no common perception of the whole issue and generalizing is difficult. Some hesitation about the literacy issue can be noted. This hesitation involves a number of matters. There is an implicit condemnation of public schooling in the recognition of the adult literacy issue. The literacy issue implies potentially great demands for financial resources.

At the federal level, the Department of the Secretary of State has recently taken the initiative, with limited resources. There are potentially great federal resources to support literacy programming, through Canada Employment and

Immigration. which is currently restricting its involvement. Some seminar participants urged that Canada follow the model of other federal states that organize adult literacy initiatives through federal employment or labour ministries.

There is also, of course, a federal-provincial difficulty. Some ministers and officials feel that they have been working very hard to deal with literacy. Several provinces — British Columbia, Alberta and Québec were specifically mentioned — have been grappling with this issue through special institutions for more than ten years. There's a feeling in provincial ministries of education that a lot of thunder has been stolen by the federal government's initiatives, without many resources put in, and some officials are upset about pressures from literacy groups. Another participant, however, noted the variable level of literacy programming in different provinces, and suggested that a comparison of provinces in terms of the percentages of functional illiterates for whom there are spaces in literacy programs could be a useful advocacy tool.

Again, the question is what partnership relations between levels and departments of government can enable concerted action for literacy.

Defining the Literacy Issue in a Canadian Context

There was extensive discussion about how to "package" or frame the literacy issue so that business, labour and government will pay serious attention to it; in what terms policy alternatives could be cast that would involve all these actors. As Gerald D'Amico emphasized, for literacy and workforce strategies on literacy, political constituency building is essential.

One strong suggestion at the seminar was that we emphasize the demographic argument. We can show that the rate of growth of our labour force will go down towards the end of the century, and that we will be entering a period of skill shortages. If we wait until suddenly labour shortage and skill shortage are upon us it will be too late to take corrective action, at least with respect to marginalized people. A problem of labour shortages at the turn of the century doesn't *necessarily* mean that we should start in Canada to develop education and training. We are one of the few OECD countries that has a fairly active immigration policy as a possible escape hatch, a source of skilled labour. The problem is that it's not only Canada facing this problem, and it will be perhaps increasingly difficult to get highly skilled people. Human resource directors in firms in other countries are already devising ways of attracting and holding skilled employees for the future.

Historically it has been a challenge trying to get Canadian governments to take the problems of educationally disadvantaged people seriously. We really don't have a tradition of long-term planning, of seeing a need ten to fifteen years down the road and taking action. But we can argue that unless we take action now, we will be in a very difficult position vis á vis our economic competitors.

There was a sense at the seminar, expressed in a variety of ways, that arguing for literacy as an issue of social justice would *not* be politically successful. Some

participants argued that although literacy work *should* be justifiable solely on the basis of social integration and citizenship, social consequences don't now command a lot of attention. Another argued that the illiterate are powerless, despised and dislocated. They don't put people in Parliament. So the argument needs to be that literacy isn't a problem for somebody else, but for all of us. The whole economy may be hurt.

Another participant argued specifically that "equity and efficiency" is not a workable frame for the literacy issue in Canada, that the term equity draws us back into the political problems surrounding the social welfare net, and many people argue that we're already paying too much for that. To formulate an effective argument for leaders in the economy, we have to understand how people in management and unions conceive of their relationship. The arguments we have used haven't been successful with leaders in the economy because they're social arguments. Business and labour don't see themselves as social partners, entering a social contract, but as economic partners. The economic issues that can encompass workplace literacy are issues of flexibility and adjustment. Management and labour don't see it now as an economic efficiency argument, and in talking to government, they don't phrase it that way.

For example, the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre runs national forums for representatives from business, labour and government. At one, dealing with future trade strategies for Canada, people agreed to disagree on free trade, but then everyone went on to talk about "adjustment." The issues dealt with in terms of adjustment include everything it takes to make us more competitive, including training and literacy.

Although it seems that voluntary organizations, governments, management and labour will all have roles, it's difficult to say which of them will take the leading role in pushing the issue, or in defining the kind of case that will be made.

Innovative Literacy Programming Strategies

There was extensive discussion about innovative programming possibilities, even though people experienced in literacy work were underrepresented at the seminar. The discussion assumed both that current arrangements do not represent a fully adequate literacy strategy, and that there is no ready-made strategy to be proclaimed. The discussion assumed, at least as a goal, a leap from current levels of programming. The discussion was complex and not resolved in any formal way at the seminar. But an argument woven out of participants' contributions is presented here.

Starting with learners

There was a strong argument that in order to think about policy and programming, we need to include the perspective of illiterates and of literacy learners, and to conceive of adult illiterates as permanent learners, not learning just what we want them to learn. Conceiving of illiterates as learners lets us think about the problem of how people make the decision to learn literacy.

How people decide to develop their literacy involves what they gain or lose immediately from learning to read and write. It is a common observation that people learn when learning lets them participate in some way that they couldn't before. The kind of participation that learning allows, of course, varies from circumstance to circumstance: taking a promotion at work, reading to children, keeping up with the news. The argument was raised — a common argument in literacy work — that programs need to be *embedded in learners' familiar life-situations* and familiar language, and in that way to be learner-centred. The slightly different argument was also raised that programs need also to be *embedded in learners' projected life situations*, and provide competences that will be useful in realizing those futures. Thus programs should both be *anchored* in familiar situations and experiences, and *be pointed* towards desired change.

De-Stigmatizing and Recruitment — in Mass Media and in Popular Organizations

People also may lose from literacy learning. Learners sometimes face the loss of familiar life patterns and friends. The loss most often mentioned in public discussions of illiteracy is the admission of illiteracy itself, in the face of the stigma attached to it. Where literacy is central in "culture," there is still a stigma attached to illiteracy, and this stigma is itself a barrier to people admitting they can't read.

One response to this is the use of media to try to break the stigma — largely involving those mass media that don't not require reading or writing — TV and radio. Hans Schutze argued that the main significance of literacy campaigns in the United Kingdom and in Germany has been to be to heighten public awareness of illiteracy and to take away the stigma. They have shown that illiteracy doesn't mean stupidity, that there are valid reasons why people haven't learned to read or write, or have lost those skills. Awareness campaigns have also shown potential learners — by broadcasting testimonies from people who have learned and who have improved their lives — that they can come out, that there's help available in gaining the skills that others have.

There was also a strong argument made for work to heighten "non-public awareness" — for using "popular organizations" — the neighbourhood house, the local union, the church, as well as the local learning centre — to de-stigmatize illiteracy and to recruit for and perhaps operate literacy programs. One important aspect of Swedish adult education since the 1970s has been recruitment strategies to create a demand among groups that don't ordinarily have a demand for education. Groups that had not been reached were identified. The voluntary sector organizations that people were already members of were central in the recruitment strategy. These organizations worked as "links" to recruit learners for other agencies that organized programs. The government allocated money to the popular movements and the voluntary sector specifically for recruitment. Each community and each workplace had a link through a voluntary sector or popular movement organization. Evaluation studies showed that this recruitment strategy was quite successful: the people targeted were the ones recruited; seventy-five percent of the people recruited had never taken part in any form of adult education. 10 It turned out that the most successful recruitment was at the workplace — where ways of thinking could be changed collectively, and it became okay for blue-collar workers to say, "I'm going into

education" — so recruitment was put in the hands of the unions. A law was passed giving trade union people the right to do outreach during work hours.

Studies also show that when people were recruited into even short-term study circles and other educational associations, this changed their self-confidence and self-assertiveness. That has led some of them to continue with further education. This has policy implications for programming to reach the most difficult-to-reach people. It points to initial recruitment through popular organizations as a way that people can slowly build up an intention to engage in full-time or longer term study.

Such arrangements have already been proposed in the discussion in Canada of educational delegates at the workplace. 11 This approach could both "anchor" learners' decision to study and their learning in the groups and the situations that are familiar to them and "point" literacy development forwards from the situations that people are active in.

An overall strategy

The discussion about popular organizations engaging in literacy recruitment was part of a larger discussion about an overall strategy for literacy development. Gerald D'Amico's presentation of the Massachusetts Literacy Campaign opened up this theme. The initial conception of a literacy strategy for Massachusetts was a volunteer corps. However, after discussions with literacy workers, this conception was enlarged to include various forms of program funding and co-ordination: funding and training support for library and independent adult literacy programs; a public awareness campaign; mechanisms for inter-agency co-ordination; and a workforce literacy strategy.

In the discussion of an overall literacy strategy for Canada, the range of literacy program types was noted: programs in public institutions, chiefly school boards and community colleges; voluntary or popular sector programs, operated by community organizations and some trade unions; and programs organized by employers, sometimes in conjunction with unions. Cutting across all these program types is the distinction between programs that use teachers, in either classroom or drop-in learning centre contexts; and programs that use volunteers, usually for one-to-one tutoring. (It was argued that public discussion should clearly assume that literacy work must include more than the use of volunteers).

It was argued that an overall strategy would encompass this range of literacy program types; would include popular organizations, in at least the ways described above; would involve social agencies — public assistance, corrections and the like — that contact people not likely to be reached by either workplace programs or programs in educational institutions; and finally would involve the labour market — management, trade unions, and government labour market authorities. There was a great deal of discussion of "partnership" — a term that is used in a variety of ways.

There were strong suggestions, most clearly made by Gerald D'Amico, that policy arrangements might be defined in terms of target groups, spanning those in

workplaces and those outside of work, and including, for example, immigrants, single mothers on welfare, young men 16-25, the working poor, and dislocated workers.

- One participant noted that the predominant view and practice of literacy and literacy work in Canada is as an educational matter, and suggested that there should be some questioning of that strategy, that "going back to school" won't be a broad enough conception to deal with the range of needs.

- One way of expanding from a purely educational conception is to shift the balance to include those at the workplace, to embed literacy work in workplace training or in apprenticeship arrangements. "Partnership" in this regard would involve management, labour and education, and the kind of joint human resource planning mentioned above. A danger was noted that the focus of literacy programming in Canada might shift totally to industry.

- Different kinds of recruitment or programming arrangements could be adopted for people unemployed and perhaps even out of the labour market. For people who are "marginalized," programs that are enough embedded in their familiar and projected life situations, that there will be some immediate impetus for them to develop literacy, would likely be based in popular organizations. "Partnership" in this regard would involve popular organizations, social service agencies and education.

The involvement of all these partners for literacy clearly requires a segmental approach, in which many agencies and organizations can be brought together and asked what they are doing to advance literacy among those they work with. The segmental approach makes it more difficult to impose a clear marching order, but it allows linkages to be developed, and a broad sensitizing of many groups to a literacy agenda. As more partners are involved, the need is increased for some kind of co-ordination at the local level. Contradictory trends in this regard were noted. Some participants had observed a sense of competition or opposition between literacy programs — even to the point that people don't talk to each other. But it was also noted that in many communities there are literacy networks where all the players sit around the same table. Such networks are developing on an *ad hoc* basis in Ontario. In Alberta, the Further Education Councils bring together representatives from education, recreation, and the voluntary sector, and the behaviour of all the players is illuminated from the point of view of what's it doing for people in the community. In Québec the OVEP's (*organismes volontaire d'éducation populaire*) have a variety of working arrangements with social assistance and employment ministries.

Finally, of course, the range of situations in which people make the decision to develop literacy must be matched not only in local co-ordination but in policy-level discussions including the range of concerned government departments and other partners.

Education for the New Economy — Policy, Funding and Equity

A number of issues regarding funding for literacy and basic skills training, training and taxation policy, and the broad policy context of this work, were also introduced.

It was also noted that difficult funding questions may arise. As one participant put it, educators have tended to think that we can all support each other. But people interested in adult literacy and adult education, and in rationally addressing the economic situation, may find themselves in confrontations, simply because resources are not infinite. We just can't spend more money on "education" in all directions. Those of us interested in adult literacy or adult education must decide whether we have to say that we are spending too much money on the young.

It was emphasized that there is a strong argument for providing education and training while people are already employed but threatened by layoff. Some examples at an enterprise or sectoral level show that training workers , instead of laying them off, is a long-term beneficial measure, because the depreciation of human capital that comes with taking people out of the labour force is enormous. However, present Canadian policy works to discourage training even for people who are only recently unemployed. One is not allowed to participate in education or training while receiving unemployment insurance, and training subsistence allowances are lower than unemployment insurance. It was argued that both of these things could be changed easily — to allow and encourage unemployed people to participate in education.

It was observed that taxation policy supports the traditional system of education rather than popular movements. Discretionary educational spending at "a recognized educational institution," is deductible for tax purposes. Public policy thus subsidizes the education system, particularly for people in upper income brackets.

The meaning of "equity" was addressed by some seminar participants who asked whether the reduction of gaps in educational attainment and in labour force participation rates can be separated from the reduction of gaps in all kinds of resources. For example, it was argued that it is not only worker skill limitations that create rigidities in the labour market and hinder adjustment. There are also things like a large wage spread, which could mean that a worker in a steel mill being restructured would drop from fifteen dollars an hour to eight dollars an hour. If everyone were making between twelve and fifteen dollars, the adjustment would be much easier. Likewise, adjustment rigidities would be reduced with an increase in minimum wages. It was also argued that the countries most successful in reducing long-term unemployment and creating a social environment supportive of education have been those committed to full employment.

Research for Adult Literacy

In a brief discussion of research for adult literacy, participants emphasized the variety of forms and audiences of needed research. One participant underlined the experience that different kinds of data move different audiences. Political officials respond to quantitative work — such as longitudinal studies, following people in programs and

afterwards. Program people respond to a more down-to-earth approach — describing practices of program organization and teaching. As the discussion developed, a distinction was drawn between pedagogical, analytical and instrumental research. Work needs to be developed at all these levels. They are not in conflict.

The prevalence of pedagogical issues in the adult education literature was observed — in resources and research on the teaching of reading and writing and basic mathematics. One participant observed that it would be useful to have research showing the ease or difficulty of making the transition to literacy. Another suggested as a research topic what is going wrong in our basic education system — what happens to children when they go to school and they get subjected to a particular bureaucratic organization of knowledge which we call education, that contributes to some of them being totally unsuccessful and a large number being only mediocre.

Analytic research is policy-related, but more oriented to identifying or clarifying issues than in asking immediately how to solve them. For example, job literacy level studies were mentioned, in which a given job is examined for its literacy requirements. For example, the requirements for janitors to be able to read mechanical or chemical information is quantified, and so is made more persuasive. The OECD plans, in its 1989 *Employment Outlook*, to include a chapter on the educational attainment of the labour force. Further work on the relationship of literacy to unemployment and long-term unemployment and labour force participation, and on shifting levels of functional illiteracy over time, was also urged.

It was also argued that it is important to understand what forces in Canadian society have an impact on the whole literacy issue, and how these forces are changing. The common claims that people need reading and writing and other basic skills to participate in workplaces and in social life are still, for us, relatively empty phrases. Work that lays out their concrete and practical meanings, and the forms of organization that those demands are part of, is one major focus of the research project at the Centre for Policy Studies in Education at UBC.

Instrumental knowledge was characterized as bearing on the organization of literacy work, in outreach, finance and delivery. We can look to analyses of program outcomes, and to experiences in other countries, for instrumental guidance. In this regard, OECD is planning some qualitative work on the successes of very low-skilled people. Several participants suggested research into the conditions of successful "partnership" arrangements — as with the human resource planning tables in Québec.

Kjell Rubenson again emphasized that there is a consensus in the literature about how to reach people that are difficult to reach, based on large experimental studies, including one that was part of a Royal Commission in Sweden. Experiments with built-in evaluation components provided groups that were indigenous to those people with resources to do outreach work. There were then hard data on the recruitment levels achieved, and changes of attitude in those groups. Similar experimental projects could be conducted in Canada, using existing groups. The notion of educational delegates could be one basis for such experiments. We might, for example, identify Canadian companies that have negotiated paid educational leave, and introduce experimental outreach programs. We might be able to show that with

educational delegates, worker participation in adult education would increase. Similar work might be done in other kinds of popular movements — the OVEP's in Québec were mentioned. Such experiments might produce results that could be transferred into policies and into strategies with lasting effects.

Conclusion

Both policy and programming for literacy work are in flux. This seminar helped to articulate some of the underlying issues in this flux. Economic themes discussed at this seminar are percolating up into government policy documents. But strategies at the government level are not yet clear. Neither are strategies at the programming level. In many parts of Canada there are programming expansions and innovations. But it is not clear how the varieties of programs will fit together, or how programming strategies and government strategies will fit together.

There are grounds for arguing, if we accept claims for a new techno-economic paradigm and labour force demographics, that people who are not now in the mainstream will need to have skills, and the economy will need them to have skills. The contexts in which they get those skills can't only be on-the-job contexts, because many people are not there. So there have to be programming strategies for educational work that will later turn out to have its application and utility in economic contexts. Literacy groups with a strong voluntary or popular orientation might just do that work.

People at the grass-roots in literacy work don't usually view literacy learners as labour supply, or their learning as workplace skill. The issue at the grass roots is the vision that people should be able to read and write and have a say in their society. But if grass-roots programs are seen as the best means to satisfy economic interests in a more highly skilled workforce or in "adjustment strategies," then there may be at least a coincidence of interests, if not an identity of purpose. There is a paradox. Popular organizations can make links between education and the disadvantaged, while the benefits will be not only them but also to the economy.

This will not be an easy coincidence of interests. Whether literacy in popular organizations is a means, or whether it must be the goal, is one way of posing the central ideological question. One seminar participant suggested that to get economic opinion galvanized around the literacy issue we can't call it "literacy," because that isn't a popular buzzword in economic circles. Another participant, who strongly supported looking to popular organizations for literacy programming, suggested this would both develop people's knowledge and strengthen community organizations, at a time when Canadian society has seen a process of breakdown within communities. These various viewpoints epitomize some of the difficulties involved.

To move ahead on these issues, it will be necessary for the many people concerned to understand and to challenge one another. We hope that this report of one seminar will serve this larger communication.

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Appendix 1
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Appendix 2*
Table 1

Unemployment rate
and proportion of unemployed in long-term unemployment
in selected OECD countries

	1979		1980		1981		1982		1983		1984		1985		1986	
	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.	Rate	Prop.
Australia	6.2	18.1	6.0	19.9	5.7	21.0	7.1	19.0	9.9	27.5	8.8	31.2	8.1	30.9	8.0	27.5
Austria	2.0	8.6	1.8	9.2	2.4	6.5	3.4	5.7	4.1	9.0	3.8	12.9	3.6	13.3	3.4	12.6
Belgium	7.4	58.0	7.8	57.9	10.0	52.4	11.7	59.5	12.9	62.8	14.0	68.0	13.1	68.3	13.0	68.9
Canada	7.4	3.5	7.5	3.3	7.5	4.2	11.1	5.3	11.9	9.8	11.3	10.1	10.5	10.3	9.6	10.9
Finland	5.8	..	4.7	27.0	4.9	..	5.4	22.3	5.5	22.3	5.2	22.3	5.0	21.1	5.5	21.1
France	6.0	30.3	6.4	32.6	7.6	32.5	8.2	42.1	8.4	42.2	10.0	42.3	10.2	46.8	10.5	47.8
Germany	3.3	19.9	3.3	17.0	4.6	16.2	6.7	21.2	8.2	28.5	8.2	32.7	8.3	31.0	8.0	32.0
Ireland	7.1	31.8	7.3	34.8	9.9	30.5	11.4	31.8	14.0	31.0	15.5	39.1	17.3	41.2	17.9	44.3
Japan	2.1	16.5	2.0	16.0	2.2	13.5	2.3	14.9	2.6	15.5	2.7	15.2	2.6	11.8	2.8	17.2
Netherlands	5.6	27.1	6.3	25.9	9.2	22.0	12.4	31.6	15.0	43.7	15.4	54.5	14.3	55.3	13.3	56.3
Norway	2.0	3.8	1.7	2.3	2.0	3.0	2.6	3.3	3.3	6.7	3.0	10.8	2.5	8.3	1.9	6.7
Spain	9.2	27.5	11.7	34.7	14.4	43.4	16.2	49.1	17.7	53.5	20.6	53.6	21.9	56.8	21.5	56.6
Sweden	2.1	6.8	1.6	5.5	2.0	6.0	2.6	8.4	2.9	10.3	2.5	12.4	2.3	11.4	2.2	8.0
U.K.	4.8	24.8	6.4	19.2	9.6	22.0	11.0	33.6	11.6	36.5	11.5	39.8	11.7	41.0	11.8	41.1
U.S.A.	5.8	4.2	7.2	4.3	7.6	6.7	9.7	7.7	9.6	13.3	7.5	12.3	7.2	9.5	7.0	8.7

* Statistics prepared by OECD, from information provided by national authorities.

Appendix 2
Table 2

Enrolment rates of 16 to 19 year-olds by single year of age for last year available (full and part-time)

	16 Years			17 Years			18 Years			19 Years		
	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T	M	F	T
Australia (81)	78.8	75.7	77.3	65.7	52.6	59.2	52.6	32.4	42.0	45.7	29.0	37.4
Austria (81)	89.2	86.1	87.1	89.8	77.4	83.7	86.7	70.1	76.5	62.8	41.2	45.6
Belgium (82)	87	86	86.5	74	78	75	56	58	57	41	44	43
Canada (81)			86.6			71.6			42.1			30.0
Denmark (80)			86			68			61			50
Finland (78)	86.8	88.2	87.5	73.1	77.8	75.4	53.4	64.5	58.8	27.4	41.4	34.5
France (81)	82.8	85.0	83.9	65.5	72.3	68.9			45.2			30.0
Germany (81)	92.4	91.7	92.1	91.7	86.8	89.3	75.9	67.1	71.9	47.9	43.9	45.9
Italy (81)	79.1	58.6	69.1	83.2	56.7	70.3	64.8	37.3	51.3	39.1	19.3	29.4
Japan (80)	93	95	94	93	95	94						
Netherlands (82)	98.3	97.3	97.8	87.3	82.1	84.7	68.7	57.0	62.8	51.2	36.1	43.7
New Zealand (82)			74.4			46.5			32.6			30.9
Portugal (77)			39.2			35.0			34.5			27.8
Spain (80)	53.1	53.7	53.4	49.2	50.9	50.1	36.5	37.7	37.1	27.3	27.7	27.5
Sweden (80)	87.0	87.8	87.4	77.7	79.0	78.4	43.4	46.3	44.7	21.6	25.7	23.5
Switzerland (83)	91.1	80.4	85.9	89.0	73.8	81.6	82.6	63.1	73.1	62.9	42.3	52.8
U.K. (81)	64.3	72.0	68.0	53.5	52.0	52.8	43.5	30.2	37.0	32.4	24.3	28.5
U.S.A. (82)	95.0	93.6	94.3	87.9	86.2	87.1	56.6	52.9	54.7	41.1	41.6	40.9

Appendix 2
Table 3

Decomposition of total labour force growth
1968-1995